



The Dual Capacity of Happiness at Work: A Systematic Narrative Review in the Hospitality Industry

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to synthesize and examine existing research on happiness at work (HAW) within the hospitality industry. This paper identified how the construct is conceptualized, what organizational mechanisms shape it, and how it influences key organizational outcomes. A systematic narrative review methodology was adopted, combining the structured transparency of systematic selection with the interpretive depth of narrative synthesis. Following PRISMA guidelines, a total of 15 peer-reviewed articles published between 2016 and 2025 were retrieved from Scopus, Taylor & Francis, and Emerald databases and analysed using thematic synthesis. HAW in hospitality operates not merely as an organizational endpoint but as a dual-capacity construct. The review further highlights that the specific conceptual lens through which HAW is approached determines which mechanisms are most effective and which outcomes are most likely to follow. The hospitality context also introduces industry-specific conditions that shape how happiness manifests and must be managed. Our article offers a more organizationally precise foundation by restricting its scope to workplace happiness, in contrast to prior review that incorporated broader well-being constructs.

Keywords: Happiness at Work; Employee Happiness; Hospitality Industry; Systematic Narrative Review; Dual Capacity

ABSTRAK

Studi ini bertujuan untuk menyintesis dan menelaah penelitian yang ada mengenai *happiness at work* (HAW) dalam industri perhotelan. Untuk tujuan tersebut, artikel ini mengidentifikasi bagaimana konstruksi kebahagiaan dikonseptualisasikan, mekanisme organisasi apa yang membentuknya, serta bagaimana ia memengaruhi hasil-hasil organisasi utama. Metode yang digunakan adalah systematic narrative review yang menggabungkan transparansi seleksi sistematis dan kedalaman interpretasi naratif. Sesuai pedoman PRISMA, sebanyak 15 artikel terpublikasi antara tahun 2016–2025 dari basis data Scopus, Taylor & Francis, dan Emerald dianalisis menggunakan sintesis tematik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa HAW dalam konteks

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perhotelan tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai tujuan organisasi, tetapi juga sebagai konstruksi dengan fungsi ganda. Review ini menyoroti bahwa lensa konseptual yang digunakan untuk memahami HAW menentukan mekanisme mana yang paling efektif dan hasil mana yang paling mungkin muncul. Selain itu, kondisi khas industri perhotelan turut membentuk bagaimana kebahagiaan muncul dan harus dikelola. Artikel kami menawarkan landasan yang lebih fokus pada aspek kelembagaan dengan membatasi cakupannya pada kebahagiaan di tempat kerja, berbeda dengan tinjauan sebelumnya yang memasukkan konsep kesejahteraan yang lebih luas.

Kata Kunci: Kebahagiaan di Tempat Kerja; Kebahagiaan Karyawan; Industri Perhotelan; Tinjauan Naratif Sistematis; Kapasitas Ganda

1. Introduction

High rates of employee turnover have consistently emerged as a major management issue in the hospitality sector (Park & Min, 2020). Turnover in hospitality even rises at almost twice the rate compared to other sectors during periods of growth (Dogru et al., 2023). Research indicates that employees within the tourism and hospitality sector often experience significantly lower levels of happiness compared to those working in other industries (He et al., 2019). This disparity is largely driven by the industry's idiosyncratic characteristics, such as irregular working hours, labor-intensive tasks, and the high demand for emotional labor during stressful customer interactions (Köşker et al., 2019; Liu-Lastres et al., 2024). Consequently, modern organizations have realized that they can no longer afford for their human capital to remain unhappy, as it directly diminishes overall productivity (Bellet et al., 2024).

Within organizational scholarship, the concept of happiness has emerged from the principles of positive psychology as a strategic mechanism to address these systemic challenges (Rastogi, 2019). However, the term remains conceptually unclear due to varying interpretations and theoretical overlaps (Kesebir & Diener, 2008). This confusion is the frequent interchangeable use of "happiness" and "subjective well-being" (Jaswal et al., 2024). To provide clarity, Subjective well-being (SWB) best understood as a traditionally viewed as a broad, global evaluation of an individual's life, encompassing a preponderance of positive affect, a low level of negative affect, and a high degree of life satisfaction (Ryan et al., 2008). In contrast, the organizational application of this concept necessitates a shift from general life assessment to the specificities of the professional environment. Fisher (2010) conceptualizes happiness at work (HAW) as a "broadband" superordinate construct that reflects employees' holistic attitudes toward multiple workplace dimensions. Within this seminal framework, HAW integrates three distinct components: job satisfaction, work engagement, and affective organizational commitment; ultimately representing the overall "goodness of fit" between the individual, transient, and organizational levels (Fisher, 2010).

The relevance of HAW is particularly pronounced in hospitality where employees are considered as the most important stakeholders in the hospitality organizations (J.-S. Lee et al., 2015). Customer perceptions of service quality are heavily influenced by employee behavior, personality, and overall attributes during interactions (Muralidhar et al., 2017), meaning that frontline employees' attitudes and behavioral patterns directly influence both customer satisfaction levels and overall organizational performance (K. J. Lee, 2018). Studies have shown that happier employees are less likely to leave their organizations, as happiness fosters stronger organizational commitment and reduces burnout (Kaur et al., 2024; Santhanam & Srinivas, 2020). In addition, research demonstrates that happier employees tend to be more productive, which enhances overall organizational success (Met et al., 2023; Nithya, 2025; Sovbetov, 2025). Happiness has also been described not merely as an individual psychological state but as a proactive organizational resource that buffers industry-specific stressors (Salas-Vallina & Alegre, 2021).

However, existing research has predominantly prioritized the tourist experience (Alhammedi & Alshurideh, 2023; Mayer et al., 2020; Vada et al., 2020), leaving the internal perspective of the organizational employee underexplored. Similarly, issues concerning worker safety, health, and psychological condition have not been a primary focus in the discipline, except for increased attention following the global pandemic (Ciarlante et al., 2024). To address this gap, this paper provides a systematic narrative review on how happiness at work shapes organizational success in the hospitality sector. A recent review on employee happiness in hospitality (Sharma & Dhiman, 2025) adopted a broad scope by including general life well-being. This review, by contrast, focuses on workplace-specific happiness only for organizational relevance. The research underscores outcomes for encouraging hospitality organizational actors to rethink employee happiness as a significant phenomenon. In addition, this paper can serve as a solid reference for future investigations and for designing employee-centered strategies across hospitality and tourism industries. Specifically, the following research questions are presented:

RQ1. How has happiness at work been conceptualized within hospitality research?

RQ2. What organizational mechanisms shape employee happiness?

RQ3. How does employee happiness influence organizational outcomes?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Happiness to Happiness at work

Happiness is a universally recognized phenomenon and is acknowledged as a fundamental human need (Aydin, 2012). Philosophically, the idea of happiness was first explored in 529 AD by Plato and Aristotle, who introduced the concept of 'eudaimonia', a focus on ethical goodness and the pursuit of virtue (Junoh et al., 2022). Scholars have divided happiness into two primary stances: hedonism and eudaimonism (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The hedonic approach defines happiness through subjective well-being, characterized by a preponderance of positive feelings, a low level of negative affect, and a global judgment of life satisfaction (Ryan et al., 2008). Conversely, eudaimonic happiness focuses on psychological well-being derived from living a meaningful life, self-actualization, and the continuous development of one's skills and talents (Ryff & Singer, 2008).

In the field of psychology, a significant shift occurred with the rise of the positive psychology movement, which moved away from the traditional "disease model" focused on illness and stress toward the study of thriving, contentment, and the "bright side" of human experience (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). As people worldwide consider happiness the ultimate goal of life, this interest naturally extended into workplace experiences (Diener, 2000). This transition is empirically justified by the fact that individuals spend about one-third of their lifespan to work (Goel & Singh, 2015). Historically, the recognition of the "human factor" in industry began with the Hawthorne studies conducted by Elton Mayo, which demonstrated that worker productivity increases when employees feel appreciated and work in a conducive environment (Bruce & Nyland, 2011). Organizations subsequently began to transition from viewing employees as mere "cogs in the system" to recognizing them as valuable human resources whose health and well-being are paramount (Obedgiu, 2017). Building upon these philosophical and psychological foundations, the specific construct of Happiness at Work (HAW) was eventually established as a comprehensive framework by Fisher (2010).

2.2. Happiness at Work

The concept of happiness in the workplace is considered a superordinate construct that represents the attitude towards multiple dimensions at work (Fisher, 2010). At an individual level, it consists of three dimensions: engagement, job satisfaction, and affective organizational commitment (Salas-Vallina & Alegre, 2021). Engagement is passion, energy, psychic connection with the activities that make them do their job, being a source of intrinsic motivation. Job satisfaction is a

cognitive evaluation of the job conditions, salary, supervision, and career opportunities and is a reactive dimension of happiness. Affective organizational commitment refers to employees' emotional link to their organization and identification with its objectives; it indicates belongingness that goes beyond calculative membership. Such three components from one side provide a lens through which to view working life that combines both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being elements (Salas-Vallina & Alegre, 2021); on the other hand, jointly they account for a significant part of the variance in person-level happiness within the occupational domain context (Fisher, 2010).

Fisher (2010) stresses that constructs related to happiness need to be studied at three levels: transient and momentary experiences; relatively stable individual-level attitudes; and relatively stable collective-level prototype attitudes. These components are frequently studied in isolation from one another in current research, necessitating a much more theoretically integrative "broadband" conceptualization. Workplace happiness is more complex than it seems. The extent to which an individual can satisfy hedonic needs for pleasure and eudaimonic needs for purpose appears to depend on the goodness of fit between the person and the features of the environmental context.

Building on this multidimensionality, Salas-Vallina et al. (2018; 2021) highlight that in complex and demanding work environments, happiness acts as a critical strategic resource that facilitates the exchange and generation of tacit knowledge. Furthermore, they confirm that when engagement, job satisfaction, and affective commitment are integrated, these three factors provide a more powerful predictor of broad behavioral outcomes compared to narrow, isolated measures. Consequently, happiness is positioned not just as an individual outcome but as a proactive mechanism that enhances organizational resilience and long-term performance.

3. Method

This review aims to identify the themes in the research discussing the conceptualization, mechanisms, and outcomes of happiness at work within the hospitality sector. To achieve this, a systematic narrative approach is adopted, a method that merges the structured transparency of systematic selection with the interpretative depth of narrative synthesis (Zhang et al., 2023). Systematic narrative reviews have also employed in tourism studies (e.g., Huang et al., 2023; Teoh et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). The article selection process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA). The search was carried out in across three databases: Scopus, Taylor & Francis, and Emerald. Indexing in Scopus is widely recognized as a respected benchmark for peer-reviewed research (E. Kim, 2023). Furthermore, Emerald and Taylor & Francis were consulted due to their comprehensive coverage of tourism and hospitality journals.

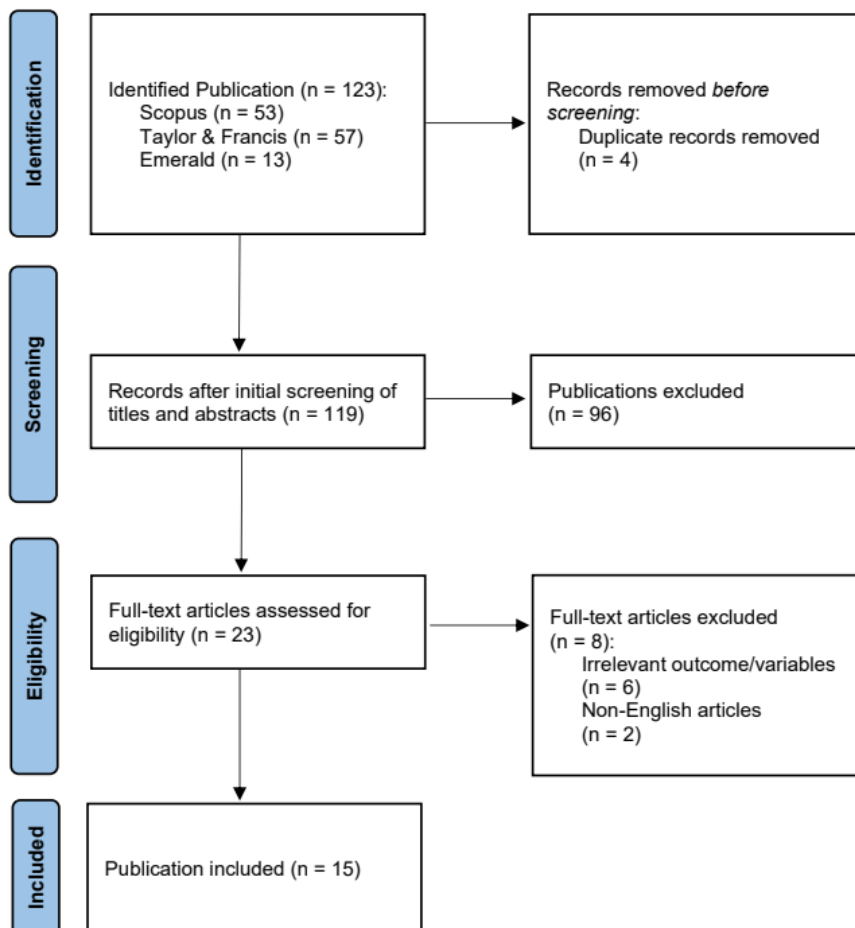
The search utilized specific queries tailored to each database to ensure comprehensive coverage of the literature. Searches across all databases were limited to articles published between 2016 and 2025. For Scopus, the search query string was: TITLE-ABS-KEY (happiness) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (employee OR staff OR personnel OR job OR workplace) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (hospitality OR tourism OR hotel OR restaurant OR lodging) AND DOCTYPE (ar) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE, "final")). In Taylor & Francis, the query string focused on abstract terms: happiness AND (employee OR staff OR personnel OR job OR workplace) AND (hospitality OR tourism OR hotel OR restaurant OR lodging). Meanwhile, the Emerald search targeted a more specific query string: "happiness at work" AND (employee OR staff OR personnel) AND (job OR workplace) AND (hospitality OR tourism OR hotel OR restaurant OR lodging)

The search initially provided 123 articles: 53 from Scopus, 57 from Taylor & Francis and 13 from Emerald. After the removal of duplicates, 119 articles remained for title and abstract screening. To ensure an objective selection process, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were

established. Articles were included if they were published in English, appeared in original peer-reviewed journals, and were specifically positioned within the hospitality or tourism industry. Furthermore, eligible studies had to explicitly investigate happiness at work or workplace happiness or employee happiness as domain variables. Conversely, articles were excluded if they focused on general life happiness of employee outside the work context, targeted non-hospitality sectors, or consisted of abstract-only records. Following the screening of titles and abstracts, 96 articles were excluded as they did not meet these criteria. The remaining 23 articles underwent full-text assessment, resulting in a final corpus of 15 articles that met all criteria for systematic review.

Information from the 15 selected studies was organized using a standardized data-extraction form to reduce the potential for human bias and error (Tranfield et al., 2003). The extracted data included author(s), publication year, methodology, and key findings related to the research questions. Thematic analysis was then performed to reveal relationships and patterns in the data. This approach applies thematic synthesis to achieve a deep and nuanced narrative understanding of the existing literature. The full study selection process, including the number of records identified, screened, and included at each stage, is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Literature Selection Process



4. Result

This The 15 articles included in this review collectively address the conceptualization, antecedents, and outcomes of happiness at work in hospitality and tourism contexts. As summarized in Table 1, the selected studies predominantly employ quantitative survey designs, with a smaller number using qualitative, mixed-methods, and phenomenological approaches.

Table 1. Summary of Reviewed Studies

Authors	Year	Methodology	Key Findings	
			RQ1	RQ2 and/or RQ3
Chia & Chu	2016	Quantitative survey (N=358), analyzed with multiple regression.	Conceptualized as a subjective state important for a harmonious working environment and guest satisfaction.	RQ2: Relationship with job stress is moderated by presenteeism; high presenteeism can trigger positive affect during stress.
Bani-Melhem, Zeffane, & Albaity	2018	Quantitative survey (N=328), analyzed with multiple regression/PROCESS	Happiness at work is a realistic assessment of mood, broader and more accurate than conventional job satisfaction.	RQ2: Influenced by coworker support and (reduced) job stress. RQ3: The most significant determinant of innovative behavior.
K.-S. Kim	2019	Quantitative survey (N=308), analyzed with hierarchical regression.	Workplace happiness is defined as satisfaction with work life and a positive state of mind.	RQ2: Positively influenced by high-commitment HRM systems. RQ3: Partially mediates the link between HRM and job engagement.
Lagrosen & Lagrosen	2019	Quality cafés and quantitative survey (N=92), using grounded theory comparative technique.	Happiness is one of five major workplace health dimensions, focusing on work content and positive feelings about the job.	RQ2: Related to health-promoting quality leadership, control, respect, and physical activity.
Melief, Schulp, & Boer	2020	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) with 5 participants.	Happiness is a transient experience shaped by employees' perceptions, interpretations, and appraisals of their work circumstances.	RQ2: Found in moments of external recognition for professional achievements and contributing to guest experiences.
Atan, Ozgit, & Silman	2021	Quantitative survey (N=271), analyzed with EFA/CFA.	Happiness at work is a multidimensional construct consisting of engagement, job satisfaction, and affective organizational commitment.	RQ2: Influenced by growth, achievement, the work itself, interpersonal relationships, working conditions, and salary.
Liu-Lastres & Wen	2021	Interviews (N=20) and quantitative survey (N=411), using EFA/CFA.	Workplace happiness is an affective dimension of employee well-being.	RQ2: Linked to workplace experience and self-actualization. RQ3: Mediates participation in wellness programs to affective commitment.
Bibi, Khan, Hayat, et al.	2022	Quantitative survey (N=311), analyzed with SEM/CFA.	Workplace happiness is divided into two broad paradigms: hedonic (pleasure/enjoyment) and eudemonic (growth/meaning).	RQ2: Perceived instrumental and volunteer CSR satisfy basic and growth needs. RQ3: Significantly influences employee innovativeness.
Toros, Maslakçı, & Sürücü	2022	Quantitative survey (N=417), analyzed with SEM.	Happiness is a competitive business asset and a work resource that acts as a protective factor against stress.	RQ3: Mediates the relationship between fear of COVID-19 and job insecurity, specifically reducing insecurity.
Akgunduz, Bardakoglu, & Kizilcalioglu	2023	Quantitative survey (N=356), analyzed with CB-SEM.	Workplace happiness is defined as the condition in which employees experience more positive than negative emotions.	RQ2: Increased by perceived organizational support (POS) and reduced job stress. RQ3: Mediated by job dedication.
Ahmad, Samad, & Han	2024	Quantitative survey (N=409), analyzed with SMART-PLS.	Happiness is defined as an emotional factor and state of well-being born out of positive organizational practices.	RQ2: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) boost happiness. RQ3: Happiness mediates the relationship between CSR and employee creativity.
Han, Long, & Khanh	2024	Mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative survey)	Working happiness is a continuous process over time where employees feel energized	RQ2: Shaped by working environment, job characteristics, relationships, work-life balance,

Authors	Year	Methodology	Key Findings	
			RQ1	RQ2 and/or RQ3
		N=703), analyzed with SmartPLS.	and enthusiastic.	and income. RQ3: Positively influences organizational commitment.
Ahmad, Han, & Kim	2024	Quantitative survey (N=428), analyzed with SMART-PLS.	Happiness is an emotional state where an employee maintains a positive mental attitude towards their organization.	RQ2: Influenced by CSR initiatives and moderated by altruistic values. RQ3: Mediates the path between CSR and employee creativity.
Ma, Li, Manta, & Alzuman	2024	Quantitative survey (N=339), analyzed with SEM.	Workplace happiness involves positive emotions derived from job satisfaction, acting as a buffer against work pressure.	RQ2: Driven by CSR initiatives and moderated by altruism. RQ3: Negatively associated with employee burnout.
Al-Edenat & Al Hawamdeh	2025	Quantitative survey (N=960), analyzed with multilevel SEM.	Happiness at Work (HAW) is the science of optimistic personal experiences, individual attributes, and optimistic organizations.	RQ2: Promoted by ethical leadership and group diversity.

Source: Author's analysis, 2026

4.1. Conceptual of Happiness at Work in Hospitality

In the hospitality sector, where the "human touch" is the core product, conceptualizing happiness at work (HAW) has evolved from a simple measure of job satisfaction into a multidimensional construct. Unlike general life happiness, HAW is specifically positioned within hospitality research as an employee-centered phenomenon that integrates internal emotional states with cognitive appraisals of the organizational environment. This section synthesizes how HAW is understood through various lenses.

4.1.1. Tourism as a Fun Learning Space

Several Building on the framework established by Fisher (2010) and elaborated upon in the literature review, several studies adopt the multidimensional approach (Al-Edenat & Al Hawamdeh, 2025; Atan et al., 2021; K.-S. Kim, 2019). This perspective allows researchers to capture a more holistic view of the employee experience, where job satisfaction relates to cognitive appraisals of working conditions, engagement reflects the unique sense of energy a worker brings to their role, and affective commitment embeds happiness within the employee-employer relationship (Atan et al., 2021; K.-S. Kim, 2019). Researchers also argued that relying solely on narrow, one-dimensional definitions limits the predictive value of happiness research, particularly when the aim is to understand complex pro-organizational behaviors (Ahmad, Samad, et al., 2024). By integrating these components, HAW is framed not just as a state of "feeling good," but as a functional and emotional state that enables employees to maintain a positive mental attitude towards their organization even under the high-pressure conditions typical of the service industry.

4.1.2. The Dynamic and Protective Resource

Several research views HAW as a continuous, dynamic process and a protective resource (Han et al., 2024; Toros et al., 2022). Rather than a fixed trait, as stated in the literature review, workplace happiness is seen as a transient experience that fluctuates within a person based on their unique perceptions, interpretations, and appraisals of daily work events (Han et al., 2024; Melief et al., 2020). This "within-person" perspective highlights that employees may feel energized and enthusiastic at one moment while facing stress the next, necessitating a management focus on "moments of happiness" triggered by external recognition or achieving perfection in teamwork. Furthermore, several studies reported that HAW acts as a buffer against industry-specific stressors like job insecurity, work pressure, and burnout (Akgunduz et al., 2023;

Ma et al., 2024; Toros et al., 2022). In this view, happiness is not just a positive outcome but a protective asset that enhances an employee's resilience, allowing them to adapt to challenges without depleting their mental health. By framing HAW as a strategic business asset, a happy workforce emerges as more adaptable and capable of making contributions that traditional and standardized management cannot easily replicate.

4.1.3. The Hedonic and Eudemonic Dichotomy

As briefly mentioned in the literature review, the distinction between two ethical and psychological paradigms of happiness: the hedonic and the eudemonic. Hedonic happiness is conceptualized as the pursuit of pleasure, enjoyment, and the minimization of pain, often manifesting in hospitality as immediate satisfaction derived from positive social interactions and fair rewards (Atan et al., 2021; Bibi et al., 2022). In contrast, eudemonic happiness is rooted in realizing one's human potential, finding meaning in work, and living virtuously (Bani-Melhem et al., 2018; Bibi et al., 2022). Research indicates that eudemonic happiness is particularly relevant for hospitality employees who seek fulfillment through contributing to a community or achieving personal growth through service (Bibi et al., 2022). While hedonic happiness is seen as a reliable indicator of general work-life satisfaction, it has been described as insufficient for capturing the deeper cognitive functioning and self-actualization that complex service roles require (Bibi et al., 2022; Liu-Lastres & Wen, 2021). Some studies integrate these perspectives, arguing that while instrumental practices like salary satisfy hedonic needs, volunteer-based or ethical practices satisfy eudemonic needs, leading to higher self-esteem and resilience (Bibi et al., 2022; Ma et al., 2024).

4.2. Organizational Mechanisms Shaping Employee Happiness

Employee happiness in the hospitality sector does not emerge spontaneously from individual disposition alone, but is systematically shaped by specific organizational mechanisms. These mechanisms function as strategic drivers that meet both the physical and psychological needs of the workforce. This section categorizes these mechanisms into four primary domains: leadership styles, corporate social responsibility (CSR), structural human resource management (HRM), and the relational support network.

4.2.1. Leadership Styles

Leadership emerges as a foundational mechanism for fostering happiness, particularly through ethical lenses. Ethical leadership (EL) promotes happiness by establishing a justice culture where fairness in decision-making and non-discriminatory treatment makes employees feel safe and relaxed (Al-Edenat & Al Hawamdeh, 2025). This is integrated with the social learning theory, suggesting that employees learn happy attitudes by observing ethical leaders who act as role models. The capacity of leaders to manage group diversity also emerges as a significant variable, with inclusive leadership creating conditions of involvement and belonging that translate directly into greater enthusiasm and commitment at work (Al-Edenat & Al Hawamdeh, 2025).

4.2.2. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

CSR acts as a potent mechanism for enhancing happiness by aligning organizational actions with employee values (Ahmad, Han, et al., 2024; Ahmad, Samad, et al., 2024; Bibi et al., 2022). The studies compare two distinct forms: instrumental CSR and volunteer CSR (Bibi et al., 2022). Instrumental CSR, which focuses on economic and security needs like support for families and reasonable workloads, directly satisfies basic needs, leading to hedonic happiness (Bibi et al., 2022). In contrast, volunteer CSR, involving community service and environmental protection, satisfies eudemonic needs by boosting self-esteem and pride (Bibi et al., 2022; Ma et al., 2024). This relationship is further integrated with the Social Identity Theory (SIT), where employees feel a surge of pride and belonging when their organization contributes to the United Nations

Sustainable Development Goals (UN-SDGs). Ahmad and Han et al. (2024) argued that individual traits, like altruistic values, serve as moderators of this mechanism, such that employees who value helping others or who prefer multitasking are more likely to derive happiness from complex CSR initiatives.

4.2.3. Structural HRM

Structural mechanisms, specifically high-commitment HRM systems, are identified as essential for long-term happiness (Han et al., 2024; K.-S. Kim, 2019). These systems ensure job security, continuous training, and performance-based compensation, which provide the stability required for a positive state of mind (K.-S. Kim, 2019). Beyond mere compensation, the design of the job itself including autonomy, feedback, and variety acts as an internal motivator (Atan et al., 2021; Han et al., 2024). For instance, when work is interactive and allows for independent thinking, employees report higher levels of job satisfaction and enthusiasm (Han et al., 2024). This is complemented by the availability of wellness programs, which fully mediate the relationship between organizational participation and affective commitment by fostering workplace happiness (Liu-Lastres & Wen, 2021). Physical health conditions, such as amenities in rest areas and the opportunity for physical activity during work hours, are also integrated into this structural domain as significant contributors to employee health and happiness (Lagrosen & Lagrosen, 2019).

4.2.4. Relational Support Network

Workplace happiness is also shaped by the establishment of a supportive relational climate, categorized as Perceived Organizational Support (POS) and coworker support (Akgunduz et al., 2023; Bani-Melhem et al., 2018). POS acts as an emotional buffer, employees who feel supported are more capable of dealing with the high stress levels inherent in the hospitality industry (Akgunduz et al., 2023). Chia & Chu (2016) extend this discussion by examining presenteeism. While traditionally viewed as negative, they argue that in a high-stress environment, a high degree of presenteeism can actually trigger positive affect and happiness because it provides a sense of control and allows employees to resolve conflicting situations with colleagues. These relational dynamics are rooted in the Social Exchange Theory (SET), where employees who receive support from coworkers and supervisors feel obligated to reciprocate with positive emotions and dedicated performance (Akgunduz et al., 2023; Bani-Melhem et al., 2018). Moments of happiness are often found in these relational interactions, particularly when external recognition for professional achievements occurs during teamwork (Melief et al., 2020).

4.3. The Influence of Happiness at Work on Organizational Outcomes

Employee happiness is not merely an individual emotional state but a pivotal driver of strategic organizational outcomes in the hospitality sector. This section examines how HAW influences three domains: innovation and creative performance, attitudinal outcomes, and the mitigation of industry-specific stressors.

4.3.1. Driving creativity and individual innovativeness

An outcome identified across studies is the significant positive relationship between HAW and employee creativity (Ahmad, Samad, et al., 2024; Bani-Melhem et al., 2018). Happiness induces a positive emotional state that enhances neuro-plasticity, allowing employees to be more adaptable, learn faster, and engage in divergent thinking to solve complex service problems (Ahmad, Han, et al., 2024; Ahmad, Samad, et al., 2024). While traditional management often struggles to spur intrinsic creativity, HAW acts as an internal motivator that encourages employees to challenge the status quo and venture into innovative solutions. Bibi et al. (2022) further compared the effects of hedonic and eudemonic happiness, finding that while both

contribute to innovativeness, eudemonic happiness has a significantly higher impact. This suggests that for hospitality firms to achieve a competitive edge through innovation, they must foster a sense of purpose rather than just immediate pleasure. Furthermore, HAW is often integrated into models as a key mediator; for instance, it bridges the gap between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and the ultimate creative output of the workforce (Ahmad, Han, et al., 2024; Ahmad, Samad, et al., 2024).

4.3.2. Strengthening Employee's Attitudinal

HAW is also identified as a fundamental determinant of an employee's attitudinal relationship with their organization, specifically influencing commitment and engagement (Han et al., 2024; K.-S. Kim, 2019). Happy employees report higher levels of affective organizational commitment, characterized by a deep sense of belonging and compassion toward their workplace (Atan et al., 2021; Han et al., 2024). This emotional attachment is crucial in the hospitality industry, where employee loyalty directly correlates with service consistency and reduced turnover costs. Moreover, HAW serves as a mediating mechanism in high-commitment HRM systems, where satisfied work-life experiences translate into higher job engagement (K.-S. Kim, 2019). When employees feel happy, they are more likely to invest their physical, cognitive, and emotional energy into their roles, which leads to improved productivity and customer satisfaction (K.-S. Kim, 2019; Melief et al., 2020). The research also highlights that participation in organizational wellness programs enhances commitment specifically by first increasing workplace happiness, emphasizing that the "happiness factor" is the essential link between policy and performance (Liu-Lastres & Wen, 2021).

4.3.3. Mitigating burnout and building psychological resilience

Beyond positive performance outcomes, HAW emerges as a vital "protective resource" that buffers against negative organizational outcomes such as burnout and job insecurity (Ma et al., 2024; Toros et al., 2022). Drawing on the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, research shows that happy employees possess greater psychological resilience, enabling them to bounce back from the high-pressure demands and long hours typical of hospitality work (Akgunduz et al., 2023; Ma et al., 2024). This resilience acts as a buffer that reduces the risk of emotional exhaustion and physical fatigue, thereby lowering the organizational burden of employee burnout. During major industry crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, HAW was found to mediate the relationship between fear and job insecurity, effectively reducing an employee's sense of vulnerability and stabilizing the workforce (Toros et al., 2022). Additionally, HAW is positively linked to job dedication; happy employees show more self-discipline and persistence in their tasks, even under stressful conditions (Akgunduz et al., 2023). This integrative view positions happiness not just as an outcome of good management, but as a strategic shield that preserves human capital and ensures long-term organizational stability in a volatile service environment.

5. Discussion

A distinguishing of this review lies in its definitional focus on happiness at work (HAW). Previous review (Sharma & Dhiman, 2025) has cast a wide net by treating constructs such as subjective well-being, life satisfaction, psychological well-being, and even spiritual happiness as interchangeable proxies for employee happiness. While these constructs are conceptually related, they extend beyond the organizational domain. By restricting inclusion to studies that explicitly investigate happiness as a workplace-bound phenomenon, the present review emphasizes the organizational specificity that broader conceptualizations may diffuse.

The conceptual of HAW that emerges from the reviewed studies reveals three interlocking orientations whose coherence becomes apparent only when happiness is studied as a

unified construct. It predetermines which antecedents are theoretically plausible and which outcomes follow strategically. When HAW is approached through the hedonic lens, the operative mechanisms tend to be instrumental that satisfy basic needs and generate immediate positive affect, ultimately turning into job satisfaction and short-term attitudinal stability (Atan et al., 2021; Bibi et al., 2022). The eudemonic orientation, by contrast, activates a distinct set of mechanisms that satisfy deeper needs for meaning, autonomy, and growth (Ryan et al., 2008). The outcomes that follow are correspondingly more durable, such as enhanced innovativeness, stronger affective commitment, and a more resilient organizational identity (Bibi et al., 2022).

What the three conceptual orientations share, and what the present review makes explicit, is that HAW functions in a fundamentally dual capacity. Rather than constituting a passive endpoint, something that results when organizational conditions are favorable, HAW simultaneously operates as an active mechanism that drives subsequent outcomes. This duality, which Fisher (2010) anticipated in characterizing HAW as a broadband superordinate construct and Salas-Vallina and Alegre (2021) formalized by positioning it as a strategic organizational resource, finds consistent empirical support across the reviewed literature. HAW mediates the relationship between CSR initiatives and employee creativity (Ahmad, Samad, et al., 2024), between high-commitment HRM systems and job engagement (K.-S. Kim, 2019), and between organizational support and individual resilience (Akgunduz et al., 2023). These findings suggest that happiness is not merely a welfare concern but a functional lever that amplifies the return on investment of virtually every major HR and leadership intervention.

This dual functionality is especially salient in hospitality, where work structures create conditions rarely paralleled in other industries. Emotional labor demands require employees to continuously manage or perform emotions (Teoh et al., 2019) making HAW structurally tied to sustaining service quality under strain. Guest-employee interactions also serve as meaningful sources of happiness, with recognition from guests triggering positive affect (Melief et al., 2020). Moreover, the service-profit chain (Hogreve et al., 2017; Son et al., 2021) links employee happiness, service quality, and customer satisfaction into a causal sequence, amplifying HAW's organizational significance. Furthermore, the cultural embeddedness of happiness implies that pathways identified in predominantly individualistic contexts may not translate uniformly across settings with different norms of hierarchy, collectivism, and emotional expression, so the practical applications do require consideration of cultural specifics (Han et al., 2024; Lagrosen & Lagrosen, 2019).

The synthesis carries implications for both practice and research. Practically, distinguishing hedonic and eudemonic pathways offers managers a diagnostic framework for targeted interventions. HR leaders should assess whether deficits lie in basic needs (compensation, workload, safety) or higher-order fulfillment such as meaningful work, development, and belonging, since mismatched interventions rarely yield lasting gains. Leadership programs should also move beyond competency models to include emotional and ethical dimensions, as ethical leadership fosters fairness climates that predict employee happiness (Al-Edenat & Al Hawamdeh, 2025). At the policy level, hospitality associations may integrate HAW metrics alongside guest satisfaction, aligning with decent work principles in SDG 8.

This review has several limitations. The search strings, while systematically designed, were necessarily selective and may have failed to identify studies using alternative terminology. Additionally, the article screening process was conducted manually by two independent researchers whose judgments, while crosschecked, remain vulnerable to the omission of relevant articles. Moreover, no formal quality assessment of the included studies was conducted which may limit the robustness of the synthesis. However, this research thus contributes to hospitality and tourism scholarship by foregrounding organizational psychology perspectives. Future research is particularly warranted in two areas. First, the heavy reliance on cross-sectional

surveys contrasts with the transient nature of HAW. Longitudinal and experience-sampling designs, along with intervention studies, would better capture temporal dynamics and connect theory with practice. Second, the geographic concentration of studies limits generalizability. Cross-national and cross-cultural work is needed to test whether mechanisms, like leadership style and CSR, operate similarly across contexts with varying power distance, collectivist norms, and labor institutions.

6. Conclusions

This systematic narrative review consolidates the fragmented literature on happiness at work (HAW) within the hospitality sector, revealing it as a dual-capacity construct. This research demonstrates that HAW functions not only as a psychological result of organizational drivers but as a proactive strategic resource. The evidence suggests that when organizational mechanisms are effectively implemented, they do not merely improve employee welfare but serve as a functional lever to amplify performance and build psychological resilience against industry-specific stressors. Ultimately, this synthesis calls for a paradigm shift in hospitality management, moving toward a holistic, employee-centered strategy that recognizes a happy workforce as a vital business asset essential for sustaining service quality and organizational stability in a volatile environment.

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8. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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